



STATEHOUSE OBSERVER

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2002

April

May

June

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Another Successful Food Drive

The Lincoln office of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired has traditionally participated in the Food Bank Food Drive, but this year, a challenge issued from Bob Shankland and the Lincoln District to the Administrative Team and the Orientation Center staff and clients provided the motivation to really “fill the barrel”!

The contest began with a friendly challenge, and was fueled by the condition that “losers feed the winners” and after all was said and done, the Lincoln District staff were declared the winners! A total of 847 items were collected, with roughly 50 people participating. They will enjoy a meal prepared and served by the Administrative team in the near future, but we all feel good about our efforts, and the Food Bank and its patrons are the real winners!

Although we don’t have the final results in yet from the drive several agencies have reported high numbers. The Department of Labor had an outstanding participation this year. Revenue also made a good showing. DAS again sponsored an interagency challenge and collected over 11,000 pounds. Just a few years ago the total drive was less than that!

This drive has a big impact. Scott Young, new Executive Director at the Food Bank told us the “State Drive” made up almost 15% of their total donations for the year. Way to go!



How Are Health Insurance Rates Calculated?

Health insurance rates are calculated using claims history and expected cost increases. The cost increase is referred to as medical trend. Medical trend is similar to the consumer price index for other goods and services, but it measures the expected cost increase for health insurance premiums. Medical trend considers price inflations, cost-shifting, increased utilization, mandated benefits, technology improvements, and intensity of care. The end result is a percentage increase that can be applied to an actual historical claims cost to estimate the future cost of insurance.

A. The medical trend that will be applied to the State of Nebraska employees plan has not been fully identified yet. In addition, credible claims history is mandatory for accurate cost forecasting. The State employee health plan experienced several plan design modifications in January 2002. A credible claims history which reflects the plan design change will not be available until the mid-summer months.

Q. What can I do to reduce costs?

A. The best way to assist in controlling health care costs is to become an informed consumer. Ask your doctor

By comparison, smokers' medical costs are 21% higher and medication costs are 28% higher than nonsmokers', according to the same RAND group report.

Q. How are other group health plans handling cost increases?

A. Other group plans are dealing with cost increases in a variety of ways. According to the earlier referenced Segal Company survey, 25% of employers plan to increase employee contributions, 27% plan to change the plan design, 9% plan to eliminate the health insurance plan, 23% plan to negotiate with the current health insurance carrier, 11% plan to change health insurance carriers, and 5% plan no changes.

Q. Why are costs increasing so much faster for medical service than for other goods and services?

A. Many factors are contributing to the rising health care costs. Advances in medical technology, equipment and facilities, and break throughs in prescriptions drugs are all cost drivers. Direct to consumer advertising for prescription drugs is an enormous cost driver. In 2000, \$2.5 Billion dollars were spent on direct-to-consumer advertising for prescription drugs. The cost of advertising is recouped in the final cost of the drug. As consumers, we are all paying for the advertisements.

Q. What is being done to manage the cost of health insurance?

A. There are many things that are already being done to control cost. For example, all of the health plans offered to State employee are considered "managed care plans". As such, discounts are negotiated with health care providers and volume discounts are provided for prescription drugs. Many other cost savings features are also built into the current health plans. Other managed care programs are being considered as a way to offset the spiraling increases of health care costs.

Following is a simplified example of how health insurance premium cost is calculated:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Health insurance Claims from 1/1/01 - 12/31/01 (historical cost) | \$50,000,000 |
| Medical trend (estimated at 10%) | X 110 % |
| Expected health insurance claims for 1/1/02 - 12/31/02 | \$55,000,000 |

In this situation, if all other factors remain constant, premium rates would have to increase enough to collect an additional \$5,000,000 in order to be able to cover the cost of claims for the 1/1/02 - 12/31/02 plan year.

Note: The example above is not intended to represent the actual claim amount or medical trend figures for the State employees group.

Estimated health care cost increases are expected to be between 8% and 17% over the next year. One analysis completed by Watson Wyatt and the Washington Business Group on Health, published in the April 15, 2002 issue of *Employee Benefit News*, indicates employers with 1,000 or more employees will see a median increase in health care rates of 14.3% this year. The same study points out that health insurance costs will double by 2007 at that rate.

Another study done by the Segal Company estimates health insurance rates for group health plans will increase by an average of 14% for the upcoming year.

Following is a list of questions and answers that address the State plan more specifically:

Q. How will the cost of my health insurance coverage change in 2003?

questions about specific treatment and make sensible, cost-conscience choices. Seek the proper level of care and use generic drugs whenever possible.

Perhaps the most important way you can help is to take care of yourself by leading a healthy lifestyle. Proper diet, exercise and eliminating unhealthy behavior are some of the ways to accomplish this. If you are being treated for a medical condition, follow your physician's instructions and maintain your treatment program.

The 2002 report by the Surgeon General of the United State found that 60% of adults and 13% of children are overweight or obese. Also, health-care policy researchers from the RAND Group indicates people who are obese have medical bills that are 36% higher and medication costs that are 77% higher than people of similar ages who are not overweight.





Summer Says Turkey!

With summer just around the corner, think about choosing turkey as an ideal summertime food. When it comes to turkey, anything goes! From ground turkey burgers and turkey franks to deli meats and cuts for the grill, or turkey stir-fry, turkey provides you with a wide range of tasty, healthy and convenient meal solutions. Turkey is very low in fat, calories, and cho-

lesterol, making it easier to digest than many other protein sources, and is an excellent protein bargain!

Cooking for Health

Turkey's reputation as a lean meat attracts people who say they would like less fat in their diet. But many people also say they like the taste fat gives food, and resist the notion of a mild meat as regular fare. With its high protein content, eating turkey periodically in place of other meats that are higher in fat and cholesterol can contribute to a healthier diet with no loss of taste or convenience.

The month of June nationally is celebrated as June is Turkey Lovers' Month." What better way to celebrate than by enjoying versatile, nutritious, and delicious turkey? Why not try this simple recipe using cooked turkey breast and celebrate the goodness of turkey not only in June, but all year round!

For more free egg or turkey recipes, turkey grilling information, or information related to eggs and food safety, contact Mary Torell, Public Information Officer, Poultry & Egg Division, Nebraska Department of Agriculture at mtorell12@unl.edu or call 402-472-0752.

The Egg Takes Center Stage

The month of May is an important time for the egg - it's National Egg Month. May is a month set aside to focus on the many ways eggs enrich our lives simply, nutritionally, economically and tastefully! For starters, the egg is a perfect blend of complete protein to balance out any meal. The egg is "nutrient-dense", containing only 75 calories while providing over 20 nutrients in varying amounts. Choline in eggs has been shown to be an essential nutrient that may play a role in memory function throughout life and into advanced age. Two carotenoids, lutein and zeaxanthin, are both abundant in egg yolks. These carotenoids have been shown to help prevent the increasingly common eye disorder of age related macular degeneration that can lead to blindness. If you have shunned egg yolks most of your life, learning to love them now may help you see the light at the end of the tunnel!

Once considered a food to avoid because of its cholesterol content, the egg has made a comeback in recent years and has regained its status as a nutritional superstar! With the research showing that an egg a day will NOT increase the risk of heart disease or stroke for healthy individuals, the time has come to reap the benefits of the quality nutrition and taste the egg adds to our diet.

During this year's National Egg Month celebration, the Poultry and Egg Division of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture urges you to incorporate eggs into your daily diet and take advantage of all the many bonuses you will receive. Why not try this quick and easy recipe utilizing the incredible, edible egg?

Crunchy Turkey Pocket

(Serves 4)

Salad Ingredients:

- 2 Cups TURKEY, cooked and diced
- 1 Can (6 oz) sliced water chestnuts
- 1 Cup seedless green grapes
- ½ Cup celery, diced
- ½ Cup almonds, slivered

Salad Dressing:

- ½ Cup mayonnaise
- ½ Cup plain yogurt
- ¼ t. curry powder

** Lettuce

** Pocket Bread

Prepare salad ingredients and toss with dressing. Line the pocket bread with lettuce. Spoon mixture into each pocket and serve immediately.

Easy Skillet Breakfast Pizza

- 1 Package (6½ oz.) pizza crust mix
- 5 Eggs
- ⅓ Cup skim milk
- ¼ Teaspoon dry mustard
- Dash of pepper
- 6 Slices of bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ Cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ Cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Grease a 12-inch skillet. Prepare pizza crust according to package directions. Line the bottom and ½ inch up the sides of the skillet with dough. Beat eggs, milk, dry mustard, and pepper in a medium bowl. Slowly pour egg mixture over the crust. Sprinkle bacon and cheese evenly over the eggs. Cover and cook over medium heat for 15 minutes or until crust is brown on the bottom. Slide out onto a cutting board and cut into wedges.



IIF

(Interactive Informational Forum)

The next IIF will be held:
Tuesday, June 4, 2002

Lancaster County Extension
444 Cherrycreek Rd
Lincoln NE 68524

Tentative Agenda

- Computer use policy: What is it really?
- Now that we know what the policy is... What does the future hold for the use of computers: Employee Self Service (ESS) i.e. paycheck, open enrollment, time sheet.
- Lincoln Vocational Rehabilitation
- Employee Relations
- NIS Training Schedule
- NIS Project Team: Update

These meetings are a chance for Human Resource professionals to share new ideas and encourage others.



The World Day on the Mall Committee has begun to meet and make arrangements for the Celebration for 2002. The Celebration will be done in conjunction with Patriot Day.

Patriot Day was created by President Bush through a proclamation calling for government buildings to lower flags to half staff, and for Americans to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of all those who died in the September 11 terrorist attacks on America.

World Day on the Mall/ Patriot Day will be held September 11, 2002 the event will be celebrating the diversity in our culture as well as remembering all those who perished on September 11, and in the continuing war on terrorism.

The Tragedy of September 11 showed us all how diverse our culture is and how many countries, cultures and ethnicities the tragedy affected. World Day on the Mall is an event to celebrate and learn about the "American Culture", which consists of different races, cultures, ethnicities and countries, as is reflected by those who were lost in the September 11 attacks.

The committee is seeking volunteers to assist with all stages of the event. If you are interested in participating contact Rod Moore at rod.moore@hss.state.ne.us or 471-6081.



The Nebraska State Historical Society

invites you to become a member, and help us carry out our mission to "safeguard and interpret Nebraska's past and make it accessible in ways that enrich present and future generations."



As a member you will receive:

- **Nebraska History**, the quarterly magazine devoted to the story of Nebraska's past.
- **Discounts** on publications and items purchased at the museum stores.
- **Free admission** to the Society's historical sites for you and your family.
- **Newsletters** to inform you about Nebraska history and activities.
- **Satisfaction** in assisting with the preservation of Nebraska history.

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift Membership

- ☐ **Annual:** \$30 per year
- ☐ **Family:** \$45 per year (includes two adults and children under 18 yrs)
- ☐ **Supporting:** \$75 per year
- ☐ **Contributing:** \$100 per year
- ☐ **Life:** \$1,000 (can be paid in two annual installments of \$500)

Make checks payable and send form to: **Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation**
408 Lincoln Center Bldg.
215 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68508-1813 Phone # 402-435-3535

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (day) _____ (evening) _____

For further information about the Society visit our website at www.nebraskahistory.org.

Send gift to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Form of payment:

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Master Card

☐ Visa ☐ Discover

Expiration date _____

card # _____

signature _____

Please share this invitation with someone you know.



Employee Events

Summer Party: Fun in the Sun!

The Second Annual Summer State Party will be held Saturday, June 22 at P.O. Pears, 322 S. 9th St. There will be giveaways from local businesses (you must be present to win), specials, a 6-on-6 volleyball tournament with two divisions, and cards and board games inside in the air conditioning!

No ticket is required to attend the event, and the first 200 state employees will receive \$3 off their lunch after checking in with the committee on the day of the event. The cost for the volleyball tournament is \$30 per team. All tournament funds collected go toward the Summer State Employee Party. Teams must have at least three state employees.

Volunteers are still needed to help with cards and board games. Call Sheri Irwin at 471-2505 for more information about the event.

Winter Party: Change is Good!

Mark your calendars now for new and improved Winter State Party on Friday, December 6. In order to make the event slightly different this year, there will be some new entertainment, different food, and a fresh attitude. Watch

for posters in November!

Contact Donna Hicks at 471-6620 or Sheri Irwin at 471-2505 if you want to assist with planning these events or to help sell tickets and hang posters in your building. We want to get the word out about these events.

Thomas C. Sorensen Forum for Political Leadership

The University of Nebraska Public Policy Center is sponsoring the Thomas C. Sorensen Forum for Political Leadership on May 22, 2002 at the UNL Wick Alumni Center. The Sorensen Forum is an effort to address the difficulties in finding able men and women who will enter public life. The seminar seeks to identify the hurdles to seeking public office, familiarize participants with the difficulties facing public servants, and discuss the skills needed to be an effective political leader. This seminar will tackle these issues, providing potential public servants with the information necessary to enter public life. The seminar will be led by Stephen Buhler, Associate Professor of English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Scott Moore, Director of Government Affairs, Union Pacific Corporation; Irv Omtvedt, Vice President Emeritus for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Vice Chancellor Emeritus for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Professor Emeritus of Animal Science, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Kim Robak, Vice President for External Affairs and Corporation Secretary, University of Nebraska Board of Regents. For more information or to register please contact the Public Policy Center at 402-472-5678 or visit the Seminar Series web site at <http://ppc.unl.edu/seminarseries/pss01-02.htm>

State Office Building/ Centennial Mall Beautification Project

Last year several Revenue employees banded together to work the soil and plant flowers around the State Office building. Historically the city has managed those flower beds, but it has become a low priority due to budget cuts.

We have received an offer from one of the nurseries in Lincoln to purchase decorative grass for two of the largest beds and the empty tree boxes for a greatly discounted price.

We need your help! Since this is not funded by anyone we are asking for donations of money to purchase the plants. We hope to raise \$300.00. The City will still provide the water and compost. We would also take donations of hostas or day lilies if you happen to have some in your home gardens you'd like to thin out.

Please let me know as soon as possible, as we hope to plant what we have by mid-May.

Jennifer_Johnson/
FrntOff/Revenue@rev.state.ne.us





State Recycling News

Added Components Bring Success to Recycling Program

Since Fiscal Year 2000 State of Nebraska Recycling has expanded its program to include several new components. Over 350 new statewide recycling volunteers was one of our first additions. Since the addition of these volunteers the State of Nebraska's annual recycling statistics have nearly doubled. As these statistics continue to rise for recycling so do our goals, therefore we need more willing state employees to join our team and help promote and contribute to the increasing recycling efforts within state office buildings. We encourage you to consider becoming a recycling volunteer for your office. If interested, check with your supervisor for permission, then contact the Nebraska State Recycling Office at (402) 471-2431 or (402) 471-9162. Our existing recycling volunteers and all those who contribute to recycling efforts deserve a great deal of recognition and appreciation.

Another successful component is the division of the state into six recycling districts, as shown on the map below. Districts 1, 2, and 3 are currently under state contract. If interested in more information on recycling services within districts 4, 5, and 6 contact the State Recycling Office for information and assistance.

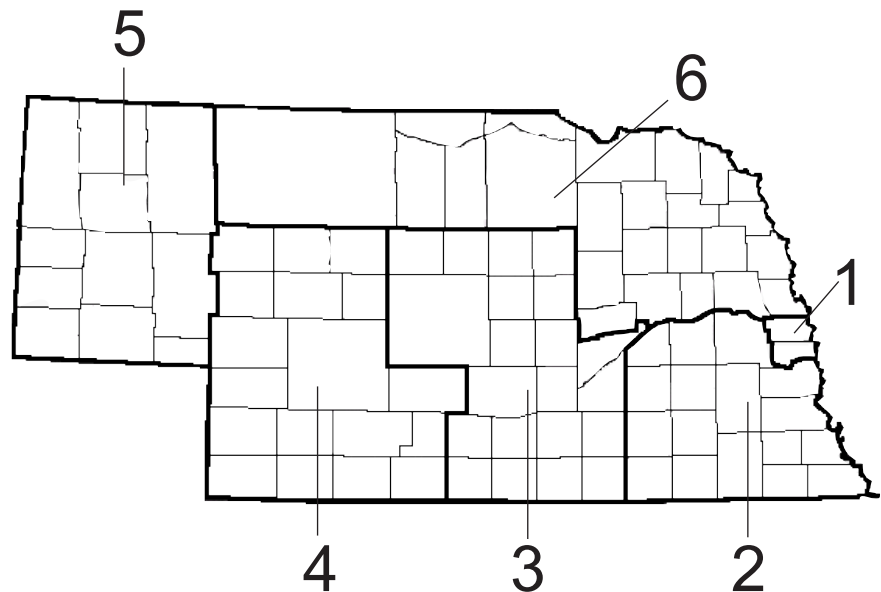
We also give credit to over 2,500 recycling desk-side containers, which have been distributed to over 100 state office locations within districts 1, 2, and 3 since July 2001. Midland Recycling, recycling's current state contract vendor, provides the containers free of charge. They are available through the State Recycling Office to all state employees and office buildings within the contract districts. The containers are cardboard, 8 1/2" X 11" X 16" in dimension, with handles and an acceptable / not acceptable recyclables chart on the side.

The average office worker produces 7 pounds of paper per week; therefore the 2,500 recycling desk-side containers distributed within the state have the potential to collect approximately 450 tons of recycled paper per year. Did you know recycling 450 tons of paper saves 7,650 trees, 1,845,000 KWH of energy, 3,150,000 gallons of water, 1,485 cubic yards of landfill and eliminates 27,000 pounds of air pollution within our environment? Would you like to say you helped in saving these precious environmental resources? Don't hesitate; join in the expanding recycling efforts by becoming a recycling volunteer and requesting a recycling desk-side container for your office area today.

Spring Into Recycling

Spring has sprung! As you begin spring clean up around the house or yard keep in mind that there are many alternatives to throwing away unwanted items in the trash. Here are some seasonal recycling and reusing ideas that are not only cleanly, but environmentally friendly too:

- Have a Garage Sale, donate to goodwill or local charity, and allow others to reuse products rather than sending them to the landfill. One person's trash is another's treasure.
- Take any unwanted household hazardous waste products to a safe and legal disposal center near your area.
- Recycling or reuse plastic and paper grocery bags
- Contact your local landfill, will the recycling your "junk?", including scrap metal, tires, mattresses, cardboard, appliances (etc).
- Build a compost Pile in your yard for all those leaves, grass, brush and garden wastes.



STATEWIDE SAFETY COMMITTEE

Mission "To promote a safe and healthy work environment for all Nebraska state employees"



Do you drive as a part of your job duties? When was the last time you took a defensive driving course? If you are like many state employees, it was when you first started working for the state.

Accidents while driving are costly, and potentially deadly, hazards of the job for many state employees. Driving hazards come in many forms. Adverse weather conditions, railroad crossings, speeding vehicles, and construction zones are just a few of these hazards. Are you prepared to handle these hazards? State agencies

offer defensive driving courses to employees prior to allowing them to drive state vehicles to assist in this preparation.

Did you know that it is recommended that you take a refresher course every five years? The courses are available in several formats including the Internet and videos. Take the time now to ask your manager or supervisor to schedule time for you to refresh your defensive driving skills. Safety at work is the responsibility of management and labor alike. Keep yourself and your fellow employees safe by making workplace safety a priority both in the office and on the road.

If you would like additional information on any safety concerns, or if you would like to join the committee, please contact a member of your agency safety committee or the Statewide Safety Committee.

The current members of the Statewide Safety Committee are:

Labor

(appointed by NAPE/AFSCME)

Dawn Kowal, CoChair

(402)595-3171

dkowal@dol.state.ne.us

Bob Basoco

Kevin Petska

Deanna Ewing

Karen Girch

Elizabeth Noble

Management

(appointed by the Governor)

Mike Samuelson, CoChair

(402)223-7541

msamuels@notes.state.ne.us

David Gates

Dale Busch

Bob Lundberg

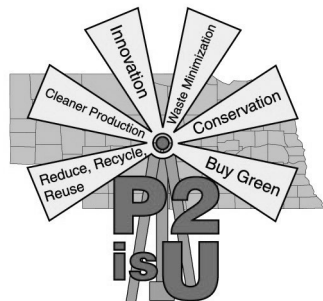
Joe Hamblin

Ron Henning

Randy Roberts

Composting For Your Yard

Backyard composting is a simple and inexpensive way to take yard and garden trimmings, some food waste, wood ash, manure, and paper waste into a rich, organic soil additive. The primary method of backyard composting is aerobic, which requires once-a-week turning and watering of the waste material and generally takes one or two months to produce compost.



Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
Pollution Prevention (P2) Program

The organic material to be composted should be formed into piles or contained in bins that do not exceed two cubic yards, so that it will not be difficult to turn the material. Food waste will tend to attract scavengers, but burying it a foot below the surface of the pile will eliminate this problem. Meat, oil, or animal products should not be added to compost

because of odor and animal concerns. A well-aerated and well-mixed compost pile will smell clean and woody. Compost can be used for flowerbeds and gardens when it is a rich dark brown color, individual particles are not distinguishable, and it is no longer producing heat.

Approximately 30 million tons of yard trimmings were generated in the U.S. in 1994. This amounts to about 14 percent of the municipal solid waste. Keeping this waste out of landfills saves you money and is better for the environment. For more information on composting, check out the Internet, your local city government, or county extension agent.

For additional Pollution Prevention information go to the DEQ web site at www.deq.state.ne.us and select Programs/Environmental Assistance Program/Pollution Prevention Program.



NMA Expo 2002

October 2, 2002

Setting New Horizons for Leadership

The Nebraska Managers Association is beginning work on Expo 2002. This year's theme is *Setting New Horizons for Leadership*. For more information on the Expo or NMA please contact:

Lois Damico 479-4331
Sheila Willaims 471-2897

Affirmative Action Newsletter Distribution Change

The Quarterly Affirmative Action Newsletter after the month of March will be posted on-line at <http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/pubs.htm>. This change is hoped to allow individuals easier access to the Affirmative Action Newsletter. If you are not able to access the internet and would like to continue receive a paper copy of the newsletter please contact Emily Weddle, Affirmative Action Specialist, at (402) 471-3678 or email at eweddle@notes.state.ne.us.

DAS-State Personnel links

State Personnel has a wealth of information online for use by employees and agencies. Make the internet your first stop when seeking information.

Employee Information

- **Benefits Information and Forms:**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/benefits/index.html>
- **State Holiday Schedule**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/holidayschedule.htm>
- **State Suggestion System** (online form)
<http://www.wrk4neb.org/idea/>
- **Training Opportunities**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/nkn/index.htm>

Newsletters

- **Affirmative Action Quartely**
http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/aa_newsletters.htm
- **Statehouse Observer**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/observer.htm>

Job Hunting

- **Apply for State jobs online:**
<https://www.wrk4neb.org/jobapp/>
- **Current vacancies**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/nejobs/per.htm>

Classification

- **Job Specifications**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/emprel/JobSpecs/>
- **Nebraska Classified System Personnel Rules**
<http://das.nol.org/personnel/nerules/>

Mark Your Calendar!



| | | |
|-----------|----|---|
| May | | |
| | 22 | Forum for Political Leadership |
| | 27 | Memorial Day State Holiday |
| June | | |
| | 4 | IIF |
| | 22 | Summer Party |
| July | | |
| | 4 | Independance Day State Holiday |
| September | | |
| | 2 | Labor Day State Holiday |
| | 12 | World Day on the Mall |
| October | | |
| | 2 | NMA Expo 2002 |
| | 13 | Columbus Day State Holiday |
| November | | |
| | 11 | Veterans Day State Holiday |
| | 28 | Thanksgiving Day State Holiday |
| | 29 | Day after Thanksgiving State Holiday |
| December | | |
| | 25 | Christmas Day State Holiday |

STATEHOUSE OBSERVER

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to be the employer of choice.

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